

# Certified Public Manager Project

## Pilot Project for Evaluation of Child Outcomes

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**Problem Statement:**

The mission of the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program is to recruit, train and supervise a diverse pool of volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in Family Court proceedings. The current method of gathering data for the GAL Program focuses on the outputs of the volunteers. Developing an outcome evaluation model would be a better method of evaluating the effectiveness a GAL has on children in foster placements, and the effectiveness of the GAL Program in general. This information could then be used to improve advocacy efforts, and could also impact funding, retention and recruitment efforts.

The value statement of the GAL Program is specific about the expectations for child outcomes. "A child's needs and desires must be an integral part of quality advocacy, and these can only be determined by consistent monthly contact with the child. Every child deserves a safe, permanent home that provides adequately for his or her physical needs and emotional well-being." This project is designed to measure those goals for child well-being.

The purpose of this project is to design the measures and methods for a pilot project. This project will develop objective measures in areas where a volunteer could have a meaningful impact: educational advocacy, safety, physical and mental health, and permanency. Using these measures, a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the volunteer in improving these outcomes will be developed and implemented as a pilot project. If shown to be effective, the methodology could be implemented on a statewide level.

## **Data Collection:**

The goal of the data collection is to evaluate the impact a volunteer has on the specified child outcome areas. Two possible direct collection methods were evaluated, based on test projects in Colorado (Tanya Camunas, 2016) and Texas (Cynthia Osborne, 2015). The Colorado project experimented with paper forms initially, and encountered major resistance from volunteers in filling out the forms, leading to failure in collecting sufficient data.

One digital option involves developing a Google, or web based system that would allow volunteers to directly input information on the identified measures and their efforts in each area. Obstacles to this include the lengthy development time needed for a whole system, and the duplication of efforts to put the same information into the official database system.

Another important concern is the security of the stored confidential data.

The second option involves collecting data through ETO (Efforts to Outcomes, the GAL database system), entered directly by volunteers. This option is built into the system, but has never been utilized. It would involve training time for volunteers and staff, and development of reports, but not as much time as the Google option.

In addition, outside verification data will be used whenever possible. School records will be a good source of data for evaluating the educational advocacy outcome. Court records will verify the permanency outcomes. Medical and counseling records can validate those outcome measures.

A number of possible outcome areas were reviewed, including those used in Colorado and Texas. The two main criteria for inclusion in the project were the impact a volunteer could have on the measure, and the objectivity in measuring the results. Information was gathered

from focus groups of county staff, senior leadership team members and volunteers. The four areas below were identified as best meeting the criteria for the pilot project:

<b>Outcome Area 1: Child Safety</b>		
GAL volunteers have frequent in person contact with the children they serve, making it more likely that signs of abuse or neglect would be identified and reported. GAL volunteers are also able to make recommendations to the court that can influence the safety of the child.		
<b>Specific Measures of Child Safety</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Tracking and Verification</b>
<b><i>Measure 1a: Safety while in foster care</i></b>	Absence of new abuse and neglect occurrence while having an open DSS cases.	DSS records and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.
<b><i>Measure 1b: Child's sense of safety</i></b>	Self-described sense of safety from child direct report	Child interviews to include questions in initial assessment and subsequent assessments.
<b><i>Measure 1c: Safety after reunification</i></b>	Children who are reunified with their parent(s) are monitored for at least 60 days, with no additional abuse or neglect noted by the GAL or reported to DSS.	Tracked by ETO data, child interviews and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.

## Outcome Area 2: Permanency

GALs are involved in the permanency process, by making recommendations and attending permanency planning hearings. GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments and court orders track progress to permanency for the child.

<b>Specific Measures of Child Permanency</b>	<b>Definition.</b> Meets federal definition of legal permanency: Reunification with Parents, Relatives/Kin, or Adoption	<b>Tracking and Verification</b>
<b><i>Measure 2a: Timeliness of permanency</i></b>	Children who were in foster care for at least 8 days and achieved permanency in less than 12 months with their safety and best interest protected	Tracked by ETO data, court orders and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.
<b><i>Measure 2b: Safety factors of reunification</i></b>	Children who were in foster care for at least 8 days and achieved permanency <u>AND</u> if reunified, all conditions of the court ordered placement plan were met by the parent(s) before reunification.	Tracked by ETO data, court orders and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.
<b><i>Measure 2c: Child's Best Interest</i></b>	Children who were in foster care for at least 8 days and achieved permanency that respected the child's best interest as stated in the GAL Court report.	Tracked by ETO data, court orders and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.

### Outcome Area 3: Physical and mental health services

Children who have been abused and neglected often have not received appropriate medical and mental health services and may require additional services to address the results of trauma. GAL volunteers can verify that the proper assessments have been completed and make recommendations to the courts to follow up on the findings and recommendations of the assessment. GAL volunteers have access to information about the child's medications and progress in therapy and therefore can make informed recommendations to the courts if there are concerns.

<b>Measures of child physical and mental health services</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Tracking and Verification</b>
<b><i>Measure 3a: Children who receive recommended services.</i></b>	Children who had physical and/or mental health services court ordered as part of their placement plan, and received the service as ordered.	Each ordered service to be tracked individually. Verified by ETO data, court orders, medical/mental health records, and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.
<b><i>Measure 3b: Positive behavioral changes.</i></b>	Children who demonstrated positive, observable behavioral changes while in foster care.	Tracked by ETO data, school disciplinary records, counseling records, foster parent reports, and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.

## Outcome Area 4: Education and Development

GAL volunteers must be informed about and engaged in the child's overall wellbeing, which includes academic progress and success. Children often change schools while in foster care, and this can be a detriment to their educational progress. GALs work closely with a child's school to track attendance and progress, and verify appropriate services are in place.

<b>Specific measures of Educational Progress</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Tracking and Verification</b>
<b><i>Measure 4a: Advancement to the next grade level within reporting period</i></b>	School age children (age 6-17) who advance to the next grade level within a 12 month reporting period.	Tracked by ETO data, school records, contact with school officials and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.
<b><i>Measure 4b: Educational progress through improved grades and/or attendance.</i></b>	School age children (age 6-17) who demonstrate an improvement in grades and/or attendance.	Tracked by ETO data, school records, contact with school officials and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.
<b><i>Measure 4c: Current and valid IEP in place for qualifying children.</i></b>	School age children (age 6-17) who qualify for an IEP have a current plan in place.	Tracked by copy of IEP in ETO records, and contact with school officials.
<b><i>Measure 4d: Involvement in extracurricular activities, either in or out of the school setting</i></b>	School age children (age 6-17) participate in extracurricular activities, for a broader range of experiences and knowledge.	Tracked by ETO data, school records, foster parents, child self-report and GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments.

Operational definitions of critical terms used in the project.

Child/Children	Child or children who are subject of a DSS abuse or neglect action, and residing in foster care during the time of the pilot project
Court Ordered	Family Court judges have jurisdiction over all DSS abuse and neglect cases. They issue court orders after all hearings that are binding on the parties involved, including DSS, defendant parents, and the GAL volunteer.
DSS	Department of Social Services
ETO	Efforts to Outcomes Database. Case tracking software used by the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program.
GAL	Guardian ad Litem
GAL Monthly Wellbeing Assessments	Required reports submitted monthly by volunteers to track contact with children, efforts of the volunteer and measures of progress in the outcome areas. Sample attached.
IEP	Individualized Education Program
Permanency	Achieving a safe, permanent home for children in foster care through legal resolution of the case. Meets the federal definition of legal permanency: Either reunification with parent or parents, placement with relatives/kin, or Adoption
Placement plan	A plan to resolve the issues of abuse and neglect in the legal case, and provide for the needs of the child while in foster placement. This is



	normally court ordered at a Merits Hearing and reviewed at least once every 12 months. Volunteers can make recommendations to be included in this plan.
Stakeholders	GAL staff members, volunteers, children, DSS, potential volunteers, funding sources.
Volunteer	Sworn in GAL volunteer with the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program

### **Data Analysis**

The parameters and outcomes for the project were developed after surveying staff members and volunteers to rank the importance and measurability of different outcomes (see appendix for results). The staff members and volunteers attended either a webinar or discussion session for an overview of the project before participating in the survey.

In order to provide consistency in the data analysis, the parameters for the pilot project will be as follows:

- a. Volunteers agreeing to participate in the pilot project will receive additional training in the outcome objectives.
- b. Volunteers will agree to see every child on a monthly basis, and complete the data entry on their visit within 5 days.

c. Volunteers will agree to complete the initial child evaluation within 5 days of accepting the case, and every 3 months after, with a final evaluation at the end of one year.

These quarterly evaluations will be reviewed with a staff member.

d. Each child will be part of a new foster care case, with no prior involvement. Tracking would start the day the child entered foster care.

e. Child will be assigned a volunteer GAL (not staff member) within 1 week of entering foster care.

f. Children must be between the ages of five and sixteen on the date they enter foster care to be part of the project.

Data will be analyzed over a 12-month period. There will be a baseline evaluation for the child at the time they entered care, and evaluated again at 3-month intervals to determine if progress is being made. Final evaluation will be at 12 months for this project.

There are several factors that will impact the analysis of the data. Since all children in foster placements have a GAL, there is no control group within the state. The lack of a control group will make it more difficult to establish the impact of the volunteer. In addition, there are other outside factors which will impact this data. The influence of DSS case workers, foster parents, and other service providers in the case will all have an impact on the outcomes for a child. Other factors outside the control of the volunteer are the Family Court system and the DSS system as custodians of the child. The volunteers themselves will be a critical part of this project. They will have to be objective observers, and committed to following a plan and submitting all records and reports monthly.

The implementation plan has been developed through a combination of research from within and outside the program. Data has been gathered from county staff, senior leaders and volunteers. Discussions and surveys were used to gather data on the outcome measures to be used, and the preferred system for gathering data.

Documents from two states, Colorado (Tanya Camunas, 2016) and Texas (Cynthia Osborne, 2015), involved in similar projects were reviewed, and phone conferences held with both states. This provided valuable insights in the following areas: the outcome measures to be used, the importance of buy-in at all levels of the project, and the methodology used to gather the data from the volunteers.

### **Implementation Plan**

The responsibility for completing all the steps in the plan was mine, working in some situations with a team as stated below. The costs, obstacles and resources for implementation were common to most of the steps. The only significant cost in this plan is time, the salaries of the staff members involved in the development.

An important factor in implementing a pilot project of this magnitude is to have as much buy-in as possible from all impacted groups. Collaborating with staff, leadership and volunteers in the design phase produced some great ideas and very positive input. An obstacle in the use of teams for input was getting the teams together for discussion. Because we are a statewide organization, travel is a significant expense for in-person meetings. To minimize this expense, meetings were held by webinar when possible, or included on other agendas with Senior Leadership and Quality Assurance Team meetings.

Resources included the use of Survey Monkey to conduct surveys of staff and volunteers and rank input at no cost (See appendix). Another significant resource was engagement with staff and volunteers who are open to change and new ideas.

One of the important criteria in the development of the project was to minimize additional work needed by both staff members and volunteers. While this could be considered an obstacle, by being mindful of this throughout the design of the project we were able to keep additional work at a minimum.

Participation in the project will result in additional work for volunteers. If this time becomes excessive, it could negatively impact volunteer retention. For this reason, inclusion in the project will be voluntary. Additional time for the volunteer would include more detailed evaluation and tracking forms to be completed monthly and quarterly, and attendance at Continuing Education training on this process. This might be offset by the volunteer entering the information online in a checkbox format. Current requirements ask all volunteers to see children monthly, and submit a Monthly Monitoring Report. Volunteers are required to complete 12 hours of continuing education monthly. It is estimated that additional time for the volunteer in excess of current requirements should be approximately one hour per month.

Step 1. Decide the specific outcome measures to be included in the process. Information was gathered from advisory team meetings with county coordinators, the senior leadership team, the quality improvement team and volunteers. These meetings were a combination of in person and webinar meetings, with the use of Survey Monkey to conduct surveys and rank possible outcome measures.

Step 2. Decide the method for gathering the input from volunteers. The same method was followed as in (step 1) above. In addition, information was gathered on the feasibility of the two options under consideration from the Statistics and Grant Administrator.

Step 3. Develop the assessment form to determine beginning and ending baseline scores, and the input form for use by the volunteers.

These three steps have been completed as part of this project. July 1, 2017 has been set as the implementation date for the pilot project. Steps 4 – 7 will be completed by this date.

Step 4. Combine all of the above information into a procedural manual for the project, that will guide both staff and volunteers in the entire process.

Step 5. Develop a continuing education curriculum for volunteers on how to measure, and how to maximize advocacy efforts on the goals.

Step 6. Advisory teams to review above information before proceeding.

Step 7. Set time frame for Pilot Project and implement Senior Leadership Meeting to determine pilot areas and time frame.

Step 8. Implement evaluation plan as detailed in Evaluation Method.

Step 9. Share results with participants and staff.

### **Evaluation Method**

The Evaluation Plan will use a team approach to look at the data collected. The team will consist of the State Director, Director of County Operations, Statistics and Grant Administrator, and selected Regional Administrators and county staff members. The evaluation team will review the results on each child, and look for any unusual findings, or any cases that did not meet the criteria for the study (6a-6e).

The evaluation team will review all the cases for trends that might indicate unintended consequences. For example, cases might be rushed to permanency to meet the 12-month benchmark for reunification, without consideration for the child's safety and best interest. The final review of each case should include a follow up interview with the volunteer if there were any concerns noted on the final evaluation.

The evaluation team will also continue to monitor the ETO data system to look for re-abuse of children after they have been re-unified. While this might happen after the 12-month time period of the study, the results will be noted in any follow-up report.

The evaluation team will review the reports generated from the ETO data system, and review any supporting documentation to insure the data is supported by outside documents wherever possible.

Each outcome will have a numeric score based on the initial assessment score as compared to the final assessment score, to determine if positive progress was made during the time of the study.

At the end of the study, the volunteers and staff participating in the project will be surveyed to gather input as to the methods used in the study, and any suggested improvements for the project should it move forward to a statewide implementation.

After reviewing the results of the study and the survey results, the team will develop recommendations about possible statewide implementation.

This data should evaluate not just the effectiveness of the volunteer in improving child outcomes, but what changes the program can make to improve child outcomes through better support and training of the current volunteers.

The data collection method will be the data gathered by ETO, entered by the volunteers. This data will be supported by external documents from other sources, including service providers, school documents and court documents.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

Based on feedback received from the senior leadership team, county staff and volunteers, the concept of a pilot project to measure child outcomes has widespread support throughout these three groups.

The parameters of the study will be:

1. The four outcome areas to be assessed will be child safety, permanency, physical and mental health services, and educational outcomes.
2. Data collection will be by volunteer entry into the ETO data system, with supporting documentation from external sources.
3. The study will be implemented July 1, 2017 and run for twelve months, and will include at least two counties in each of the four regions.
4. Results will be evaluated by a team of staff members. The team will make recommendations on possible statewide implementation, improvements to the child outcome evaluation project, and improvements to child advocacy efforts throughout the GAL program.

Survey Results Attached as Appendix:

CPM 2017 SurveyMonkey Results

Proposed Evaluation Forms Attached as Appendices:

2017 Child Initial Assessment Form

2017 Child Monthly Wellbeing Assessment Form

2017 Child Quarterly Assessment Form

Sources:

Cynthia Osborne, P. (2015). *Child Outcomes and Volunteer Effectiveness Study: Determining the Effectiveness of CASA on Child Outcomes*. Austin: Texas CASA.

Tanya Camunas, S. D. (2016). *Outcomes for Impact Project How to Guide*. Broomfield County, Co.: CASA of Adams & Broomfield Counties, Co.



*Overview of SurveyMonkey Staff and Volunteer Survey*

*Staff members and volunteers participated in this survey after attending either a webinar or discussion session about the Outcome Evaluation Pilot Project.*

*Results were gathered between 12/30/16 and 1/9/17.*

*Content and results of the survey are below.*

**Outcome Evaluation Pilot Project****Measuring Better Outcomes for Children**

We are in the development phase of a pilot project to measure how volunteers impact the outcomes for abused children.

Thank you for giving us input in developing this tool.

q1	Do you support the concept of a pilot project that measures outcomes for children?		
	<b>Answer Choices –</b>	<b>Responses %</b>	<b>Responses #</b>
	Yes	100.00%	8
	No	0.00%	0
	Maybe	0.00%	0
	Total		8

q2

Please rate the following choices for measuring and achieving better outcomes for children:

–	Not measurable or achievable –	(no label) –	Moderately measurable and achievable –	(no label) –	Very measurable and achievable –	Total –	Weighted Average –
Safety of children: no new abuse and neglect reports	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	12.5%	62.5%		
	0	0	2	1	5	8	4.38
Permanence: Timeliness of Reunification	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	12.5%	62.5%		
	0	0	2	1	5	8	4.38
Permanence: Percent of children who achieved permanency	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	62.5%	37.5%		
	0	0	0	5	3	8	4.38
Physical and mental health services: percent of children who received court ordered services.	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%		
	0	0	1	2	5	8	4.5
Education outcomes: percent of children who advance to the next grade level.	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	85.7%		
	0	0	1	0	6	7	4.71
Placement Stability	12.5%	12.5%	37.5%	25.0%	12.5%		
	1	1	3	2	1	8	3.13
No Re-entry into foster care	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	37.5%		
	1	1	1	2	3	8	3.63
Family like placement	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%		
	1	2	4	1	0	8	2.63
Emancipating youth have permanent connections	12.50%	12.50%	37.50%	25.00%	12.50%		
	1	1	3	2	1	8	3.13
Delinquency involving youth	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%		
	1	1	2	2	2	8	3.38

[Comments\(2\)](#)

Quality of Life Change: (1) Feeling (2) Perception  
 Children's perception of personal safety

q3

Please rate the following choices by importance to volunteers in measuring and achieving better outcomes for children:

	Not important to volunteers –	(no label) –	Moderately i mportant to volunteers –	(no label) –	Very important to volunteers –	Total –	Weighted Average –
Safety of children: no new abuse and neglect reports	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
	0	0	0	0	8	8	5
Permanence: Timeliness of Reunification	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	12.5%	62.5%		
	0	0	2	1	5	8	4.38
Permanence: Percent of children who achieved permanency	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	75.0%		
	0	0	1	1	6	8	4.63
Physical and mental health services: percent of children who received court ordered services.	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%		
	0	0	2	0	6	8	4.5
Education outcomes: percent of children who advance to the next grade level.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%		
	0	0	0	4	4	8	4.5
Placement Stability	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%		
	0	0	0	2	6	8	4.75
No Re-entry into foster care	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
	0	0	0	0	7	7	5
Family like placement	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%		
	0	0	1	4	3	8	4.25
Emancipating youth have permanent connections	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%		
	0	0	2	2	4	8	4.25
Delinquency involving youth	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%		
	0	0	2	4	2	8	4

Comments(0)

q4

Based on your personal knowledge in case work with children, please rate the following outcome measures by their importance to children:

	Not important to children –	(no label) –	Moderately i mportant to children –	(no label) –	Very important to children –	Total –	Weighted Average –
Safety of children: no new abuse and neglect reports	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
	0	0	0	0	8	8	5
Permanence: Timeliness of Reunification	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	75.0%		
	0	0	1	1	6	8	4.63
Permanence: Percent of children who achieved permanency	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%		
	0	0	1	2	5	8	4.5
Physical and mental health services: percent of children who received court ordered services.	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%		
	0	2	2	0	4	8	3.75
Education outcomes: percent of children who advance to the next grade level.	0.0%	12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	37.5%		
	0	1	2	2	3	8	3.88
Placement Stability	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%		
	0	0	0	1	7	8	4.88
No Re-entry into foster care	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	37.5%	62.5%		
	0	0	0	3	5	8	4.63
Family like placement	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%		
	0	0	1	2	5	8	4.5
Emancipating youth have permanent connections	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%		
	0	0	0	2	6	8	4.75
Delinquency involving youth	0.0%	12.5%	37.5%	25.0%	25.0%		
	0	1	3	2	2	8	3.63

Comments(0)

q5

What would be the most effective method of gathering information on measurable outcomes?

	1 –	2 –	3 –	Total –	Score –
Develop a system for volunteers to enter information using Google Docs.	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%		
	2	4	2	8	2
Train volunteers to enter their own information into ETO.	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%		
	5	2	1	8	2.5
Other idea:	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%		
	1	2	5	8	1.5

# South Carolina GAL Program

## Initial Child Assessment

This tool is designed to assess the wellbeing of children within 14 days of entering foster care. It is used to communicate the general status of the child as monitored by the GAL Volunteer and reviewed by the Case Manager or County Coordinator.

County Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

### Outcome Area 1. Child Safety

#### Prior to entering foster care:

- ☐ Child was alleged to be a victim of child abuse and/or neglect.
- ☐ Child was alleged to be at substantial risk of child abuse and/or neglect.
- ☐ Child suffered physical injury as a result of abuse or neglect in their home.
- ☐ Other child safety factors:

### Outcome Area 2. Permanency

#### Prior to entering foster care:

- ☐ Child was in a safe and stable home situation with biological family.
- ☐ Child was in a safe and stable home situation, but not with biological family.
- ☐ Child was not in a safe and stable home situation.
- ☐ Other permanency factors:

### Outcome Area 3: Physical/Mental Health Services

#### Prior to entering foster care:

- ☐ Child was not receiving physical and mental health services on a regular basis.
- ☐ Child was receiving some physical and mental health services, but not all of the needs were being met.
- ☐ Child was receiving all physical and mental health services that were needed or recommended.
- ☐ Child had a documented history of negative behaviors in either home or school environment.
- ☐ Other physical and mental health factors:

### Outcome Area 4. Education and Development

#### Prior to entering foster care:

- ☐ Child was on grade level.
- ☐ Child was not on grade level, or had been promoted with minimum scores.
- ☐ Child was attending school on a regular basis with \_\_\_\_ number of absences in the preceding period.
- ☐ Child was receiving all educational services that were needed or recommended.
- ☐ Child's disciplinary record for the preceeding 12 months indicated \_\_\_\_ number of incidents.
- ☐ Child had a current IEP plan in place.
- ☐ Child was involved in these extracurricular activities:

# South Carolina GAL Program

## Wellbeing Monthly Assessment

This tool is designed to monitor the Wellbeing of Children in Care. It is used to communicate the general status of the child as monitored by the GAL Volunteer and reviewed by the Case Manager or County Coordinator.

County Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

### Outcome Area 1. Child Safety

#### Goal 1a. Child is not abused or neglected while in out of home care.

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ A. Child has not been harmed in care, and there are no signs of abuse or neglect.
- ☐ Child has not been harmed, but there are safety concerns in the placement.
- ☐ There are possible signs of abuse or neglect, but they have not been substantiated.
- ☐ Harm to the child has been reported, but not substantiated.
- ☐ Harm has been substantiated while in care.

{Comment Section: For any answer other than A, provide additional information here:}

#### Goal 1b. Child expresses a sense of safety while in out of home care.

##### Ask on each visit: "Do you feel safe in this home?"

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ A. Child states affirmatively that he/she feels safe in current placement.
- ☐ Child says yes, but appears hesitant or reserved in answering
- ☐ Child gives a neutral or unclear answer, but does not elaborate
- ☐ Child gives a neutral or unclear answer, and appears fearful
- ☐ Child gives a negative answer.

{Comment Section: For any answer other than A, provide additional information here:}

#### Goal 1c. Child is not abused or neglected after reunification with family.

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ A. Child states affirmatively that he/she feels safe in the home.
- ☐ B. Volunteer has not observed any signs of abuse or neglect.
- ☐ Child has not been harmed, but there are safety concerns in the home.
- ☐ There are possible signs of abuse or neglect, but they have not been substantiated.
- ☐ Harm to the child has been reported, but not substantiated.
- ☐ Harm has been substantiated while in care.
- ☐ N/A. Child has not been reunified.

{Comment Section: For any answer other than A and B, provide additional information here:}

#### Assess the Child's Progress towards Safety. Select one:

- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ In Crisis Not moving towards goals
- ☐ Making Progress towards goals
- ☐ Several goals achieved
- ☐ Thriving (all goals achieved)

## Outcome Area 2. Permanency

### Goal 2a. Child will achieve permanency in less than 12 months, with their safety and best interest considered.

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ Child entered care within the last 30 days, and has not returned home.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, has not returned home.
- ☐ Child returned home within 9 months of entering out of home placement
- ☐ Child returned home within 12 months of entering out of home placement
- ☐ Child returned home, but there were concerns with safety or best interest as stated in GAL Court Report.
- ☐ Child did not return home within 12 months of entering out of home placement.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

### Goal 2b. Measurable progress towards permanency for the child made within 12 months.

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Merits hearing completed timely within 35 days of entering care, placement plan ordered.
- ☐ Merits Hearing continued, no progress being made towards permanency.
- ☐ Merits Hearing completed but not timely, placement plan ordered
- ☐ Defendant Parents actively working on treatment plan, completion expected within 12 months.
  
- ☐ Judicial Review or Permanency Planning Hearing or other hearing held within 9 months, progress noted.
- ☐ Judicial Review or Permanency Planning Hearing or other hearing held within 9 months, no progress towards permanency noted.
  
- ☐ Termination of Parental Rights hearing scheduled.
- ☐ Termination of Parental Rights completed.
- ☐ Adoption finalized.
  
- ☐ Child placed in a permanent placement and case closed.
- ☐ No progress has been made towards permanency.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

### Goal 2c. If a child achieved permanency through reunification, all conditions of the court ordered placement plan are met by the parent(s) before reunification.

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ Child did not achieve permanency through reunification..
- ☐ Child was reunified and all conditions of the court ordered placement plan were met.
- ☐ Child was reunified and all conditions of the court ordered placement plan were NOT met.
- ☐ Child returned home, but there were concerns with safety or best interest as stated in GAL Court Report.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

### Goal 2d. Child achieved permanency that respected the child's best interest as stated in the GAL Court report.

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ Child did not achieve permanency.
- ☐ Child achieved the permanency outcome that was recommended in the GAL Court Report.
- ☐ Child achieved a permanency outcome that was not recommended in the GAL Court Report.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}



**Assess the Child's Progress towards Permanency. Select one.**

- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ In Crisis: Not moving towards goals
- ☐ Making Progress towards goals
- ☐ Several goals achieved
- ☐ Thriving (all goals achieved)

<b>Outcome Area 3: Physical/Mental Health Services</b>
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**Goal 3a. Children who had physical and/or mental health services court ordered as part of their placement plan, and received the service as ordered.**

*Choose one (drop down menu)*

- ☐ Child entered care within the last 30 days, and has not had any services ordered.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, has not had any services ordered.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, services have been ordered, but not received.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, services have been ordered, some services have been received but not all.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, services have been ordered, all services have been received.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Goal 3b. Children will demonstrate positive, observable behavioral changes while in out of home care.**

*Choose all that apply:*

- ☐ Child had no documented negative behaviors when entering foster care.
- ☐ Child had documented negative behaviors before entering foster care.
- ☐ Child developed negative behaviors after entering foster care.
- ☐ Child's behavior has improved slightly since entering foster care, based on documentation from reliable sources (school, foster home, therapist). The number and/or severity of negative incidents has decreased slightly.
- ☐ Child's behavior has improved moderately since entering foster care, based on documentation from reliable sources (school, foster home, therapist). The number and/or severity of negative incidents has decreased significantly.
- ☐ Child's behavior has greatly improved since entering foster care, based on documentation from reliable sources (school, foster home, therapist). No negative incidents have been reported in at least 30 days.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Assess the Child's Physical and Mental Health Services. Select one.**

- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ In Crisis Not moving towards goals
- ☐ Making Progress towards goals
- ☐ Several goals achieved
- ☐ Thriving (all goals achieved)

## Outcome Area 4. Education and Development

### Goal 4a. Children who advanced to the next grade level within reporting period.

*Choose one (drop down menu)*

- ☐ Child has not received a report card/progress report since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has received a positive report card/progress report and is on target to advance to the next grade level.
- ☐ Child has received a negative report card/progress report and is not on target to advance to the next grade level.
- ☐ Child has received a final report card for the year and has advanced to the next grade level.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

### Goal 4b. Children will demonstrate educational progress through improved grades and/or attendance.

*Choose all that apply*

- ☐ Child has not received a report card/progress report since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has received a positive report card/progress report that demonstrates improvement in attendance when compared to period before entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has received a positive report card/progress report that demonstrates improvement in grades or educational progress when compared to period before entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has received a positive report card/progress report that demonstrates educational progress over the minimum required for promotion.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken}

### Goal 4c. Children will have the opportunity for involvement in extracurricular activities, either in or out of the school setting.

*Choose all that apply*

- ☐ Child has not experienced an extracurricular activity since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has experienced a small number of extracurricular activities since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has expressed he/she does not wish to participate in extracurricular activities since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child is involved on a regular basis in extracurricular activities since entering foster care.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken}

### Goal 4d. Children who qualify for an IEP have a current plan in place.

*Choose all that apply*

- ☐ Child has not been evaluated for an IEP.
- ☐ Child has been evaluated and does not qualify for an IEP.
- ☐ Child qualifies for an IEP, and has a current plan (reviewed within this school year) in place.
- ☐ Child has an IEP, but it has not been reviewed within this school year.
- ☐ Child has an IEP, but has changed schools, and it has not been reviewed at the current school.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken}

### Assess the Child's Education and Developmental Progress. Select one.

- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ In Crisis Not moving towards goals
- ☐ Making Progress towards goals
- ☐ Several goals achieved
- ☐ Thriving (all goals achieved)

## South Carolina GAL Program

### Quarterly Child Outcome Assessment

This tool is designed to assess the wellbeing of children in foster care. It is used to communicate the general status of the child as monitored by the GAL Volunteer and reviewed by the Case Manager or County Coordinator.

County Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Outcome Area 1. Child Safety

##### Prior to entering foster care:

- ☐ Child was alleged to be a victim of child abuse and/or neglect.
- ☐ Child was alleged to be at substantial risk of child abuse and/or neglect.
- ☐ Child suffered physical injury as a result of abuse or neglect in their home.
- ☐ Other child safety factors:

##### Goal 1a. Child is not abused or neglected while in out of home care.

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ A. Child has not been harmed in care, and there are no signs of abuse or neglect.
- ☐ Child has not been harmed, but there are safety concerns in the placement.
- ☐ There are possible signs of abuse or neglect, but they have not been substantiated.
- ☐ Harm to the child has been reported, but not substantiated.
- ☐ Harm has been substantiated while in care.

{Comment Section: For any answer other than A, provide additional information here:}

##### Goal 1b. Child expresses a sense of safety while in out of home care.

##### Ask on each visit: "Do you feel safe in this home?"

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ A. Child states affirmatively that he/she feels safe in current placement.
- ☐ Child says yes, but appears hesitant or reserved in answering
- ☐ Child gives a neutral or unclear answer, but does not elaborate
- ☐ Child gives a neutral or unclear answer, and appears fearful
- ☐ Child gives a negative answer.

{Comment Section: For any answer other than A, provide additional information here:}

##### Goal 1c. Child is not abused or neglected after reunification with family.

Choose one (drop down menu)

- ☐ A. Child states affirmatively that he/she feels safe in the home.
- ☐ B. Volunteer has not observed any signs of abuse or neglect.
- ☐ Child has not been harmed, but there are safety concerns in the home.
- ☐ There are possible signs of abuse or neglect, but they have not been substantiated.
- ☐ Harm to the child has been reported, but not substantiated.
- ☐ Harm has been substantiated while in care.
- ☐ N/A. Child has not been reunified.

{Comment Section: For any answer other than A and B, provide additional information here:}

**Assess the Child's Progress towards Safety. Select one:**

- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ In Crisis Not moving towards goals
- ☐ Making Progress towards goals
- ☐ Several goals achieved
- ☐ Thriving (all goals achieved)

**Steps that have been taken by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Child Safety:**

**(Check those that have been completed)**

- ☐ Volunteer has visited the child monthly.
- ☐ Volunteer has asked the child monthly "Do you feel safe in this home?"
- ☐ Volunteer has established a positive rapport with the child to insure honest and open communication.
- ☐ Volunteer has reported any signs of abuse or neglect to their case manager and DSS.  
\_\_\_\_ N/A if there was nothing to report.
- ☐ Volunteer has discussed with their case manager any safety concerns, and followed up on any recommendations.  
\_\_\_\_ N/A if there were no safety concerns.
- ☐ Volunteer has made recommendations to the court involving the safety of the child.
- ☐ List other actions that were taken:

**Recommendations for future actions by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Child Safety:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

<b>Outcome Area 2. Permanency</b>
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**Prior to entering foster care:**

- ☐ Child was in a safe and stable home situation with biological family.
- ☐ Child was in a safe and stable home situation, but not with biological family.
- ☐ Child was not in a safe and stable home situation.
- ☐ Other permanency factors:

**Goal 2a. Child will achieve reunification in less than 12 months.**

*Choose one (drop down menu)*

- ☐ Child entered care within the last 30 days, and has not returned home.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, has not returned home.
- ☐ Child returns home within 9 months of entering out of home placement
- ☐ Child returns home within 12 months of entering out of home placement
- ☐ Child did not return home within 12 months of entering out of home placement.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Goal 2b. Child will make measurable progress towards permanency within 12 months.**

*Check all that apply:*

- ☐ Merits hearing completed timely within 35 days of entering care, treatment/placement plan ordered.
- ☐ Merits Hearing continued, no progress being made towards permanency.
- ☐ Merits Hearing completed but not timely, treatment/placement plan ordered

- ☐ Defendant Parents actively working on treatment plan, completion expected within 12 months.
- ☐ Judicial Review or Permanency Planning Hearing or other hearing held within 9 months, progress noted.
- ☐ Judicial Review or Permanency Planning Hearing or other hearing held within 9 months, no progress towards permanency noted.
- ☐ Termination of Parental Rights hearing scheduled.
- ☐ Termination of Parental Rights completed.
- ☐ Adoption finalized.
- ☐ Child placed in a permanent placement and case closed.
- ☐ No progress has been made towards permanency.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Goal 2c. If a child achieved permanency through reunification, all conditions of the court ordered placement plan are met by the parent(s) before reunification.**

*Choose one (drop down menu)*

- ☐ Child did not achieve permanency through reunification..
- ☐ Child was reunified and all conditions of the court ordered placement plan were met.
- ☐ Child was reunified and all conditions of the court ordered placement plan were NOT met.
- ☐ Child returned home, but there were concerns with safety or best interest as stated in GAL Court Report.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Goal 2d. Child achieved permanency that respected the child's best interest as stated in the GAL Court report.**

*Choose one (drop down menu)*

- ☐ Child did not achieve permanency.
- ☐ Child achieved the permanency outcome that was recommended in the GAL Court Report.
- ☐ Child achieved a permanency outcome that was not recommended in the GAL Court Report.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Assess the Child's Progress towards Permanency. Select one.**

- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ In Crisis Not moving towards goals
- ☐ Making Progress towards goals
- ☐ Several goals achieved
- ☐ Thriving (all goals achieved)

**Steps that have been taken by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Permanency:  
(Check those that have been completed)**

- ☐ Volunteer has discussed with the child their wishes in the area of permanency.
- ☐ Volunteer has attended a Foster Care Review Board Hearing.
- ☐ Volunteer has attended a Permanency Planning Hearing.
- ☐ Volunteer has prepared a Permanency Planning Court Report.
- ☐ Volunteer has worked collaboratively with others to expedite permanence for the child.
- ☐ Volunteer has made recommendations for permanency to the court.
- ☐ Volunteer has identified individuals who may be possible permanent options for the child.

- ☐ List other actions that were taken:

**Recommendations for future actions by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Permanency:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Concerns noted by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Permanency:**

If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:

<b>Outcome Area 3: Physical/Mental Health Services</b>
--

**Prior to entering foster care:**

- ☐ Child was not receiving physical and mental health services on a regular basis.
- ☐ Child was receiving some physical and mental health services, but not all of the needs were being met.
- ☐ Child was receiving all physical and mental health services that were needed or recommended.
- ☐ Child had a documented history of negative behaviors in either home or school environment.
- ☐ Other physical and mental health factors:

**Goal 3a. Children who had physical and/or mental health services court ordered as part of their treatment/placement plan, and received the service as ordered.**

*Choose one (drop down menu)*

- ☐ Child entered care within the last 30 days, and has not had any services ordered.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, has not had any services ordered.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, services have been ordered, but not received.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, services have been ordered, some services have been received but not all.
- ☐ Child in placement more than 30 days, services have been ordered, all services have been received.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Goal 3b. Children will demonstrate positive, observable behavioral changes while in out of home care.**

*Choose all that apply:*

- ☐ Child had no documented negative behaviors when entering foster care.
- ☐ Child had documented negative behaviors before entering foster care.
- ☐ Child developed negative behaviors after entering foster care.
- ☐ Child's behavior has improved slightly since entering foster care, based on documentation from reliable sources (school, foster home, therapist, child self-report). The number and/or severity of negative incidents has decreased slightly.
- ☐ Child's behavior has improved moderately since entering foster care, based on documentation from reliable sources (school, foster home, therapist, child self-report). The number and/or severity of negative incidents has decreased significantly.
- ☐ Child's behavior has greatly improved since entering foster care, based on documentation from reliable sources (school, foster home, therapist, child self-report). No negative incidents have been reported in at least 30 days.
- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Assess the Child's Physical and Mental Health Services. Select one.**

- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ In Crisis Not moving towards goals
- ☐ Making Progress towards goals
- ☐ Several goals achieved
- ☐ Thriving (all goals achieved)
- ☐

**Steps that have been taken by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Physical and Mental Health Services:**

**(Check those that have been completed)**

- ☐ Volunteer has discussed with the child their physical and mental health services in an age appropriate manner.
- ☐ Volunteer has discussed with the child any behavioral changes in an age appropriate manner.
- ☐
- ☐ Volunteer has made recommendations to the Court in the area of physical and mental health services.
- ☐ Volunteer has reviewed the treatment plan/court order for all services that were recommended and/or court ordered.
- ☐ Volunteer has reviewed the services ordered above and followed up with all providers on the current status of services.
- ☐ Volunteer has researched any additional services needed and advocated for those services.
- ☐ Volunteer has reviewed the child's current needs and behavioral status based on provider, school, foster home and child self-reports.
- ☐ Volunteer has reviewed the list of current medications prescribed for the child and verified they are being administered as prescribed.
- ☐ List other actions that were taken:

**Recommendations for future actions by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Permanency:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

<b>Outcome Area 4. Education and Development</b>
--

**Prior to entering foster care:**

- ☐ Child was on grade level.
- ☐ Child was not on grade level, or had been promoted with minimum scores.
- ☐ Child was attending school on a regular basis with \_\_\_ number of absences in the preceding period.
- ☐ Child was receiving all educational services that were needed or recommended.
- ☐ Child's disciplinary record for the preceeding 12 months indicated \_\_\_\_ number of incidents.
- ☐ Child was involved in these extracurricular activities:

**Goal 4a. Children who advanced to the next grade level within reporting period.**

*Choose one (drop down menu)*

- ☐ Child has not received a report card/progress report since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has received a positive report card/progress report and is on target to advance to the next grade level.
- ☐ Child has received a negative report card/progress report and is not on target to advance to the next grade level.
- ☐ Child has received a final report card for the year and has advanced to the next grade level.

- ☐ {Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken:}

**Goal 4b. Children will demonstrate educational progress through improved grades and/or attendance.**

*Choose all that apply*

- ☐ Child has not received a report card/progress report since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has received a positive report card/progress report that demonstrates improvement in attendance when compared to period before entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has received a positive report card/progress report that demonstrates improvement in grades or educational progress when compared to period before entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has received a positive report card/progress report that demonstrates educational progress over the minimum required for promotion.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken}

**Goal 4c. Children will have the opportunity for involvement in extracurricular activities, either in or out of the school setting.**

*Choose all that apply*

- ☐ Child has not experienced an extracurricular activity since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has experienced a small number of extracurricular activities since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child has expressed he/she does not wish to participate in extracurricular activities since entering foster care.
- ☐ Child is involved on a regular basis in extracurricular activities since entering foster care.
- ☐

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken}

**Goal 4d. Children who qualify for an IEP have a current plan in place.**

*Choose all that apply*

- ☐ Child has not been evaluated for an IEP.
- ☐ Child has been evaluated and does not qualify for an IEP.
- ☐ Child qualifies for an IEP, and has a current plan (reviewed within this school year) in place.
- ☐ Child has an IEP, but it has not been reviewed within this school year.
- ☐ Child has an IEP, but has changed schools, and it has not been reviewed at the current school.

{Comment Section: If needed, provide additional information here, including what actions you have taken}

**Assess the Child's Education and Developmental Progress. Select one.**

- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ In Crisis Not moving towards goals
- ☐ Making Progress towards goals
- ☐ Several goals achieved
- ☐ Thriving (all goals achieved)

**Steps that have been taken by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Educational and Developmental Progress:**

**(Check those that have been completed)**

- ☐ Volunteer has discussed with the child their educational progress.
- ☐ Volunteer has discussed with the child their school attendance.
- ☐ Volunteer has discussed with the child any desires regarding extracurricular activities.
- ☐ Volunteer has discussed with the child any disciplinary issues.
- ☐ Volunteer has reviewed grade/progress reports, disciplinary records, attendance and counseling records.



- ☐ Volunteer has reviewed the IEP/504 plan if there is one in place.
- ☐ Volunteer has reviewed with foster parents homework arrangements if they apply to the child..
- ☐ Volunteer has made recommendations to the Court in the area of educational and developmental progress.
- ☐ Volunteer has met or talked with teachers, guidance counselors or any other school officials regarding any educational concerns with the child.
- ☐ List other actions that were taken:

**Recommendations for future actions by the volunteer in the Outcome Area of Permanency:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.